

January 19, 2022

Dear Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to earnestly ask you to not pass the "Vaccine Passport" that has been proposed. I am opposed to this mandate for several reasons. Before I give you these reasons I would like to communicate that I am pro-vaccine. I believe that vaccines are good, and generally are very safe. However, I don't believe that vaccines should be mandated for every person in Montgomery County.

I believe this is an over-reach of governmental control over free citizens. If the government can require a vaccine (that is new and relatively untested over time), then what else will they be able to mandate? People's bodies and their health are a very private sector that should not be mandated by the government.

Why not allow each business to decide if they would like their customers to be required to be vaccinated? This mandate will be burdensome for businesses. They will need to hire a full-time bouncer to check and enforce customers entering the facility. Businesses are already understaffed and in financial strain. Many businesses, including my own family farm and winery, operate mostly outdoors. Requiring a vaccine passport for all customers would reduce the number of customers, add to their burden of staffing and logistics, all for naught. All of their outdoor seating is generously social distant. And for the small percent of residents in Montgomery County who are choosing not be vaccinated—some for legitimate health concerns—could no longer enjoy a venue that has been a safe haven for socializing in a safe and responsible way during Covid times. I belong to a gym near my home that starting in the fall of 2021 proactively communicated that they would require vaccines to enter. This is a fair request. The owner of the business thought about it, it was important to her, she believed it was the right thing to do for her clientele, she felt that she could enforce the request adequately—the business owner was and is free to do this. But that is her free choice as a business owner. Why force every big and small business to constrain themselves something that might not be necessary for their model, or something that might make them go out of business, or something they could not enforce. Why not let the businesses chose for themselves? If Montgomery County passes the vaccine mandate, please be prepared for many businesses to go under or move to another county.

In fact, this leads me to the next reason I oppose a Vaccine Passport: this would eliminate the small percentage of residents in Montgomery County who choose to not be vaccinated from society. Persons who have true health concerns about the vaccine have had a very difficult obtaining medical exemptions. A dear friend has a son with a severe nut allergy. A vaccine could give him a reaction resulting in death. He has not been able to obtain a medical exemption. This family would no longer be allowed to life their life in Montgomery County if the Vaccine Passport if passed.

Furthermore, how do you expect to enforce this mandate? Societies and communities need solid and thoughtful rules to keep their citizens safe. If there are rules that can't be enforced, or rules where a large number of people can cheat the system to get around the rule, then society begins to ignore all the rules. If a Vaccine Passport is required, I can imagine many people creating false vaccine documents, bribing "vaccine bouncers" at the doors of businesses, and otherwise finding ways to cheat the system. Do you plan to police this mandate when the county desperately needs its police to keep our neighborhoods, schools, and streets safe? Why pass a law that is so burdensome to actually enforce?

Another reason is that this does not actually help our county's public health. At this moment people who are vaccinated and unvaccinated are contracting Covid. Why impose a mandate that will be difficult for businesses, eliminating non-vaccinated people from society, nearly impossible to enforce, and unscientific that is not truly helping keep our county free from Covid.

There are many other reasons why I believe this Vaccine Passport is a bad idea. While we appreciate the county's care for its residents, please do not burden us with this mandate.

Sincerely and respectfully, Erin Frerichs